

Textual Cohesion of Medieval Latin Treatises. A corpus-based study.

Text cohesion and coherence have been an important area of linguistic research for many years now (Wierzbicka 1969, Halliday, 1976). In the study of Latin text, the most widely adopted approach was the one focussing on the functions of cohesion markers in discourse, as is reflected in numerous works by H. Pinkster (2015), C. Kroon (1995), R. Rissellada (1987) and others. Many have been also attempts at finding an efficient method of automatic evaluation and measurement of the degree of text coherence.

In this paper we will present the results of our corpus-based study of textual cohesion in Medieval Latin prose writing. Specifically, we investigate the corpus of works composed by Matthew of Cracow (ca. 1345 – 1410), a Polish-German theologian and diplomat. The texts are lemmatized and PoS-tagged with the TreeTagger (<https://www.cis.uni-muenchen.de/~schmid/tools/TreeTagger/>; <https://glossaria.eu/>).

We demonstrate the usefulness and limitations of selected automatic and semi-automatic methods in cohesion and coherence study of a medieval text. In particular, we aim at showing which cohesive mechanisms can be investigated automatically and which still require manual analysis. We divide our study in two parts dealing with devices contributing to local (e. g. simple word repetition, causal or consecutive connectors) and global cohesion (the text's beginning and ending markers). We specifically show how they change with a genre or communicative function of a text. We next compare the use of coherence markers in Matthew's work with the usage of his contemporaries as attested in several author-specific subcorpora of the Electronic Corpus of Polish Medieval Latin. This allows us to discriminate between the cohesion markers that were specific to Matthew of Cracow and ones that he owed to medieval literary and philosophical tradition. We also attempt at indicating cohesion patterns that the authors may have used independently of the text genre or literary convention.

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